

Correcting Commonly Misused Terms I

Be careful when you write not to say one thing when you mean another. Some words and expressions—because they are similar or akin to other words and expressions—are commonly misused. Studying them together can help you use them correctly.

Consider the similar-sounding words *accept* and *except*. Whereas *accept* is a verb that means “to receive” or “to agree to,” *except* is usually a preposition that means “but” or “other than.” Study the following example:

Most stores in the United States do not *accept* Canadian money. They refuse all currency *except* U.S. dollars.

A few of the many commonly misused terms are listed below.

a, an *A* and *an* are both articles, but *a* is used before words that begin with either a consonant or a “yew” sound. *An* is used before words that begin with either a vowel or an unsounded *h*.

all ready, already *All ready* means “completely ready.” *Already* is an adverb that means “before” or “by this time.”

all together, altogether *All together* means “in a group.” *Altogether* is an adverb that means “completely” or “on the whole.”

between, among *Between* shows the relationship of one person or thing to another. *Among* shows the relationship of more than two persons or things.

could of *Could of* is grammatically incorrect; use *could have* instead.

its, it's *Its* is a pronoun showing possession. *It's* is a contraction meaning “it is.”

learn, teach *Learn* means “to gain knowledge.” *Teach* means “to instruct, to give knowledge to.”

passed, past *Passed* is always the past tense of the verb “to pass.” *Past* can be a noun, adjective, preposition, or adverb.

precede, proceed *Precede* means “to go before” or “to come before.” *Proceed* means “to continue” or “to move along.”

than, then *Than* is usually a conjunction used in comparisons, as in “That stereo costs more than I can afford.” *Then* is usually an adverb meaning “at that time,” “soon afterward,” “for that reason,” or “in that case.”

EXERCISE Underline the misused word or expression in each of the following sentences. Then write the correct word or expression on the line provided. If a sentence is correct, write *correct*.

Sample _____ *teach* _____ Did your parents learn you how to handle money?

1. _____ In the distant passed, people didn't use money to buy things.
2. _____ Bartering proceeded money.

Revising with Style

LESSON

3
Continued

3. _____ What is bartering? It's a direct exchange of goods and services.
4. _____ If you were a shepherd living under the barter system, you could go to a market to exchange sheep for grain.
5. _____ If the sack of grain was worth only half a sheep, then you might have had a problem.
6. _____ Of course, getting the sheep to the market might already have been a problem.
7. _____ Money was invented to make an exchange of goods or services easier.
8. _____ If you had to choose among paying for things with sheep or with dollar bills, which would you prefer?
9. _____ You'd want to use the lightest, smallest, most durable form of purchasing power a seller would accept.
10. _____ Given that paper money is light, small, and durable, it's altogether understandable why paper money works so well.

Correcting Commonly Misused Terms II

Many words and expressions are commonly misused. One way to avoid using them incorrectly is to memorize them—and to think before you write.

amount, number While both *amount* and *number* refer to quantity, use *amount* with nouns that cannot be counted; use *number* with nouns that can be counted.

can, may *Can* indicates the ability to do something. *May* indicates the permission to do it. *May* also means "might," as in "I may go to the bank today."

different from, different than *Different from* is preferable to *different than*.

farther, further *Farther* refers to physical distance; *further* refers to degree or time.

irregardless, regardless *Irregardless* is incorrect because it is a double negative: the prefix *ir-* and the suffix *-less* both have negative meanings. Use *regardless* instead.

leave, let *Leave* means "to go away" or "to depart." *Let* means "to allow" or "to permit."

less, fewer *Less* refers to things that cannot be counted; *fewer* usually refers to things that can be counted.

loose, lose *Loose* is an adjective that means "free" or "not fitting tightly." *Lose* is a verb meaning "to have no longer," "to misplace," or "to fail to win."

raise, rise *Raise* is a transitive verb meaning "to cause to move up." *Rise* is an intransitive verb meaning "to get up" or "to move up."

sit, set *Sit* means "to be seated"; *set* means "to put" or "to place."

whose, who's *Whose* is a pronoun showing possession. *Who's* is a contraction of "who is."

EXERCISE Underline the misused word or expression in each of the following sentences. Then write the correct word or expression on the line provided. If a sentence is correct, write *correct*.

Sample _____ Who's _____ Whose going to know if it's real gold or not?

- _____ Paper bills are much lighter than gold coins, and because they come in larger denominations (\$5, \$10, and so on), you can carry fewer of them.
- _____ A farther advantage of paper money is that it is more difficult to counterfeit than gold.
- _____ It's also easier to control the amount of dollars in circulation if the dollars are made of paper.
- _____ Now people often use credit cards, which are different than any earlier form of money.

Revising with Style

LESSON

4
Continued

5. _____ Their money sets in the bank until the credit-card bill is due.
6. _____ People's credit cards could be stolen, yet they wouldn't loose any money if they canceled their cards immediately.
7. _____ A credit-card company will occasionally rise the interest rates that people have to pay.
8. _____ However, people who pay their bills on time avoid paying interest, irregardless of the rate.
9. _____ May you predict how much a hundred dollars will buy fifty years from now?
10. _____ If you put a hundred dollars in the bank now and let it there, it will earn compound interest.